critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. . . Y.
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New York Theatre Week

What Every Woman Knows-City Center 12/22. Helen Hayes stars in first winter production of NYC Center Theatre season in revival of Barrie classic.John Stix directed cast which includes Betsy von Furstenburg,John Cromwell...Black Eyed Susan-Playhouse 12/23. Gordon Pollock, James Goodman,Everett Hart present new play by A.B Shiffrin with Vincent Price,Kay Medford,staged by Gregory Ratoff...Ruth & Paul Draper Show- Bijou 12/26. Richard Barr and Charles Bowden present pair for limited run of 3 weeks...The Saint of Bleecker St-Broadway 12/27. Chandler Cowles presents new play with music by Gian Carol Menotti...The Flowering Peach-Belasco 12/28.Producers Theatre presents Clifford Odets new play onNoah with Menasha Skulnik starred.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

Lunatics and Lovers-Broadhurst 12/13. Split notices filed by critics on Sidney Kingsley's sex farce. News,Mirror,Women's Day found most of it hilarious,while World Telegram & Sun ,liked most,but not all. Remainded admitted farce with auth or staged and which includes such favorites as Dennis King,Vicki Cummings,Shelia Bond ,plus newcomer Buddy Hackett was hectic enough,but not funny enough. Chapman, News,lead "pro" parade,loved the quite giddy,slightly naughty script with the fine and daffy performances. Coleman,Mirror,billed it as a galloping farce,but warned that it is not for the kids. Dash,Women's Wear, also enjoyed the evening of merry and frothy laughter. But Atkinson,Times,found much of it labored farce without the giddy speed necessary. Kerr,Herald Tribune, and McClain,Journal American, gave the author an "A" for effort but were forced to admit he just can't write farce.

Witness for the Prosecution-Miller 12/1[illegible]. 100% perfect melodrama all the NY daily critics,mystery fans to a man,agreed. Agatha Christie's London hit seems bound to repeat in NY. Francis Sullivan,Patricia Jessel and the entire cast shared credit with director Robert Lewis for a perfect performance. Surprise ending of show., which program asked viewers not to reveal,was not told by critics. A first rate sample of Christie,approved Atkinson,Times. Play is for every person who . has a sole,defines Kerr,Herald Tribune. Coleman,Mirror,suggests playgoers get their tickets to show as soon as possible. For sheer,unadulterated entertainment there is nothing around town to equal it,notes Hawkins,WT&S. Theatrical skulduggery at its peak,adds Watts,Post. McClain,Journal American,also approved,but not of the final minute. For his view,it lasted one minute too long.

Critical Digest Plans

After the first of the year "Critical Digest" will be presented in a new,expanded form. Firstly,it will be printed and will contain photographs and sketches. Secondly,the features and services offered will be widely increased. The $25 yearly service will include the newly designed "Playgoer's Guide Chart" of NY and out of town ticket,critic,etc data. The $10 service will feature the expanded,printed NY newsletter. Other services,by mail,phone,will be offered free or at a slight charge to subscribers. Friendship and loyalty of subscribers through the years has made this expansion plan possible and is greatly appreciated. Merry Christmas and the very Best of New Years. TMK.

Off Broadway

New School dramatic readings organized by John Heldabrand have been halted by dispute with Actors Equity. Union has demanded $30 per performance and $5 for a rehearsal week for the Sunday night readings. School claims it can't meet Equity's salary demands and close down the scheduled seven evening series after the fourth program which featured Geraldine Page in Hedda Gabler.

The Merchant of Venice with Clarence Derwent and Whitford Kane will open at Club Theatre, Finch College Playhouse, Jan 6...Oscar Wilde's An Ideal Husband will be presented at Royal Playhouse weekends, 62 E 4...Will Kuluva, Vaughn Taylor and Betty Sinclair will join Geraldine Fitzgerald in Doctor's Dilemma opening Jan 11 at Phoenix...The Crucible will open Jan 7 at Hudson Guild House, 436 W 23... Blackfriar's Guild next play will be Bamboo Cross by Teophane Lee...Equity Library Theatre first Community Theatre project this season will be Misalliance.

Twelfth Night production at Jan Hus House, 351 E 74 by Shakespearewrights is the best NY has had in an a number of years, raved Atkinson, Times. Norman Peck's direction was tabbed fresh and candid, and entire cast was praised for speaking their lines intelligibly and without affectation. Critic did suggest group pick themselves a simpler name.

Elizabethan Theatre Workshop founded by Joseph Papp, which puts on productions at Emmanuel Presbysterian Church, 729 E 6 was highly recommended on the basis of its first "evening", which is by invitation only. It featured Whitford Kane doing the "first grave digger" scene from Hamlet, Alexander Scourby and Nan McFarland in the parting scene from Richard II, and Will Hare in a scene from Edward II. Charles Norman also lectured on Marlowe's influence upon Shakespeare.

Yiddish Theatre

The King and the Cobbler, which opened the 40th season of The Folksbiene, 128 Stanton, was okayed by JEP, Times, as an original and imaginative work given a spirited performance.

Futures

BLACK EYED SUSAN	Playhouse	Dec 23
Draper's Show	Bijou	Dec 26
Sail [illegible] Bleecker St	Broadwy	Dec 27
Flowering Peach	Belasco	Dec 28
Anastasia	Lyceum	Dec 29
Trouble makers-1 30PM	Presidt	Dec 30
House of Flowers	Alvin	Dec 30
Time of Your Life	City C	Jan 5
Doctor's Dilemma	Phoenix	Jan 11
Festival	Longacre	Jan 12
Fourposter	City C	Jan 19
Plain & Fancy		Jan 20
Silk Stocking	Imperial	Jan 21
Grand Prize	Lyceum	Jan 26
Samarcand		Jan 30
Desperate House		Feb 7
Dark Is Light Enough		Feb 9

Theatre Book Comments

"Theatre World No 5" edited by Frances Stephens covers London productions and has generally better and clearer photos than Dan Blum's US "Theatre World" rates Down, Variety. Macmillan is the publisher of English yearbook.

"The First Night of Twelfth Night" by Leslie Hotson (Macmillan) was billed as a fascinating, brillant book which should probably be read with a certain amount of skepticism, by Atkinson, Times.

TUNE WRCA BEN GRAUER 7 30 AM day after Broadway opening for quotes of reviews compiled by "C.D."

Green Room Department

OFF BWAY PANNED...Though the growth of the Off Broadway groups is a most welcome phenomenon, it has not as yet solved any problems of art,notes Gassner,Educational Theatre Journal. The possible exception is a solution of the problems of using minute stages to advantage. Movement has only solved problem of putting on a show that Broadway won't do, with a cast which Broadway will not yet put in good parts.

ACTORS AID...John "Red" Kullers,who aided many actors get parts in shows,most recently as unofficial casting agent for Lunatics and Lovers,was just released from French Hospital where friends gave more than $2000 reports Sullivan,News.Earlier Sylvester,News,had filed a story on the plight Kullers was in,labeling him as responsible,if not involved,in the success of at least 5 stage productions and the careers of dozens of actors...Eva Leonard-Boyne,who was forced to leave Portrait of A Lady cast needs to "pay back" twenty pints of blood to NY Red Cross bank. She is in critical condition at Sinai Hospital,Baltimore,and NY friends are asked to contribute blood here.

COLUMN TIPS....Black Eyed Susan producers can't agree on what size lettering to give themselves in signs,hears Farrell....Mrs.Kurt Weill rejected plan to stage Street Scene off Broadway unless orchestra had 36 pieces,Walker reports...Shubert Alley rumor says Sid Caesar may return to legit in Bachelor Party.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS....Chorus girls arriving to work in their slacks and sweaters are a far cry from the old Ziegfied days ,sighs McClain,Journal American...An underrated performance that Watts,Post,like is Vinie Burrows' job as Eartha Kitt's friend in Mrs.Patterson...Farce and melodrama,"little" plays,so abundant in the 1920's would do well today,but they would have to be very well written and well down,reminds Burr,Playbill.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Patty McCormick,9 year old menace of The Bad Seed, is unfazed by her new fame and read the funnies instead of the raves, Herridge,Post,learned. Youngster's goal in life is not to stick with theatre, but to be a nun... What Ever Woman Knows is important in Helen Hayes career because it severed her connections with Hollywood,she told Hawkins,World Telegram & Sun.She played in Barrie's work in April 1926 at the Bijou,and has done it many times on the air,plus making a film of it. Play is also important because it is the script which turned her into a star.

Pros & Cons by TMK

Lunatics and Lovers is Sidney Kingsley's attempt to put the Damon Runyon type characters into the sex business. There is no doubt that the play will be a hit, but at least one playgoer must report that he was embarassed to find Dennis King in such a low down role. Except for "Cookeye Joe" played by Nat Cantor,the characters Kingsley picked were not interesting enough to care about,farce or no farce. Kingsley has always sought new subjects for his works, thus the theatre can be thankful that he probably will not go back to this one.

Witness for the Prosecution is one of the few mysteries of all time where nobody,but nobody,in the audience knew how it was going to end right up to the last 15 seconds. Superb performances and inspired direction make the evening an exciting one in the theatre. Even the hoked up Hollywood type switch ending can be forgiven.

"Theatre World" 10th edition of Dan Blum's yearbook is a useful,and only,complete guide to the past theatre year, on and Off Broadway.

Broadway booking jam has become acute. Though it is usual for many plays to open during December, more plays are staying open for a longer time. Many shows are on extended pre Broadway tours,while others lucky enough to book a NY house can only do so for short term periods before they must go house hunting again.

Plays

6 plays will open during week of Dec 27-Jan 1...The Troublemakers has scheduled a 1 30 PM Dec 30 opening at President,so as not to conflict with House of Flowers Dec 30 evening opening...Anastasia will open Dec 29 at Lyceum, The Grand Prize will open there Jan 26...Solid Gold Cadillac vacations Dec 20-27...Reclining Figure moves to Holiday Dec 27...Desperate Hours opens at Broadway Feb 7..."Cosh" mentioned in Witness for Prosecution is an English term for blackjack.

People

Pearl Bailey collapsed during performance of House of Flowers in Philadelphia and Juanita Hall finished the performance...Margaret Barker replaces Eva Leonard-Boyne,Portrait of Lady,..Bill Chambers subbed for Byron Mitchell,Quadrille,for two performances...Philip Bourneuf will appear in What Every Woman Knows and Doctor's Dilemma...Betty Field replaces Hollis Irving in Festival...Marilyn Ross replaces Yvonne Adair,Silk Stockings ...Robert Donat will make his Broadway debut in The Sleeping Prince...Harry Bull, jr,Town & Country editor and former president of NY Drama Critics Circle,died at age 49...Daisy Belmore,veteran actress who last appeared in Rose Tattoo,died at age 80...Franchot Tone and Jay Robinson will star in The Extra Man,new play by Theodore Phipps and John McClain,Journal American critic.

Other Broadways

Palm Springs Playhouse opens 9th season under direction of Herb Rogers,who also runs the Tenthouse Theatre,Highland Park,Ill in summer...Milwaukee City Circle raising $115,000 to open 300 seat arena house,3000 donors expected...Porgy and Bess will travel to Alexandria,Cairo,Athens,Istanbul,Ankara,Damascus and Tel Aviv...New hits in Berlin are Teahouse of August Moon and Caine Mutiny Court Martial...A leading male star of Moscow's Stanislavsky Theatre has been fired for being drunk.

Theatre TV Notes

CBS TV Arsenic and Old Lace Jan 5 features Helen Hayes,Billie Burke,Boris Karloff,Peter Lorre,Edward Everett Horton,and will be directed by Herbert Swope,Jr... Box Office Television has completed working arrangements with 28 unions involved in putting on a Broadway show. Group plans to present plays not attached by film companies. Also Zenith Radio Corp held meeting of Broadway producers explaying their TV fee system.

Theatre Book Notes

King of Hearts published by Doubleday,Solid Gold Cadillac published by Random House..."Let's Meet The Theatre" by Dorothy and Joseph Samachson published by Abelard-Schuman.

CRITICAL DIGEST
505 Fifth Ave,NYC

First Class Mail